

In the Claims:

The entire set of pending claims, including amendments to the claims, is submitted herewith pursuant to 37 CFR § 1.121(c)(3).

Claims 1-11. (Cancelled).

12. A transaction auditing system for a business transaction involving at least two remotely-situated parties, the system comprising:

a data storage arrangement adapted to store user profile information including party-identifying information for parties to a business transaction, to store aspects of business transactions, the aspects including specified events that would occur at different times and to provide information indicative of a status of the transaction; and

a central processing arrangement coupled to the data storage arrangement and adapted to:

receive event data for one of the specified events from one of the remotely-situated parties, the event data having a timing-related characteristic and information for associating the specified event with a common business transaction;

receive event data for another one of the specified events from another one of the remotely-situated parties, the event data having a timing-related characteristic and information for associating the specified event with a common business transaction;

automatically associate the received event data for the specified events with a particular common business transaction and with at least one of the parties as a function of the confirmation data and the user profile information; and

determine an elapsed time between the specified events as a function of the received confirmation data and automatically audit the particular common transaction as a function of the elapsed time.

13. (Original) The system of claim 12, wherein the event data includes party-identifying information that identifies at least one party involved in the event and wherein the central processing arrangement is adapted to automatically associate the received event data with the at least one party as a function of the party-identifying information.

14. (Original) The system of claim 13, wherein the data storage arrangement is adapted to store user profile information including auditing process information and wherein the central processing arrangement is adapted to automatically audit the particular common transaction using the elapsed time and auditing information in the user profile for the at least one party automatically associated with the event data.

15. (Original) The system of claim 14, wherein the data storage arrangement is adapted to store different auditing process information for different parties and further to audit the particular common transaction using a first auditing process for a first party and, in a separate audit, audit the particular common transaction using a second auditing process for a second party.

16. (Original) The system of claim 15, wherein the data storage arrangement is adapted to store auditing process information including instructions for comparing timing characteristics for specific events and wherein the central processing arrangement is adapted to compare the timing characteristics using the instructions for comparing timing characteristics.

17. (Original) The system of claim 16, wherein the central processing arrangement is adapted to receive event data including data for the initiation of a shipping event for shipping goods and data for delivery of the goods and to automatically determine an elapsed time between the shipment and delivery of the goods.

18. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the central processing arrangement is adapted to audit the transaction involving the shipment of the goods to determine whether the elapsed time is within an predefined limit and, in the event that the shipment falls within the predefined limit, to authorize payment for the transaction and, in the event that the shipment falls outside of the predefined limit, withhold authorization for payment for the transaction and flag the transaction for evaluation.

19. (Original) The system of claim 14, wherein the data storage arrangement is adapted to store user profile information including auditing process information for different types of specific events and wherein the central processing arrangement is adapted to automatically audit the particular common transaction using the elapsed time and auditing information for the specific type of event for which event data is received.

20. (Original) The system of claim 12, wherein the central processing arrangement is adapted to audit the particular common transaction to determine whether the elapsed time is within an predefined limit and, in the event that the elapsed time falls within the predefined limit, to authorize payment for the transaction and, in the event that the elapsed time falls outside of the predefined limit, withhold authorization for payment for the transaction and flag the transaction for evaluation.

21. (Original) The system of claim 12, wherein the central transaction arrangement is adapted to receive event data for a reconciliation process and to track timing between events in the reconciliation process as a function of the elapsed time.

22. (Original) The system of claim 21, wherein the central transaction arrangement is further adapted to:

in response to an audit of the particular common transaction determine that the elapsed time falls outside of a range specified by one of the parties to the transaction;
initiate a reconciliation process; and

track time between the initiation of the reconciliation process and another reconciliation event.

23. (Original) The system of claim 22, wherein the central transaction arrangement is adapted to track time between the completion of the reconciliation process and payment for the transaction.

24. (Original) The system of claim 23, wherein the central transaction arrangement is adapted to track time between the initiation of the reconciliation process and payment for the transaction.

25. (Original) The system of claim 12, wherein the central processing arrangement is adapted to receive event data for a multitude of shipping transactions and to determine an elapsed time between shipment and delivery events for particular ones of the shipping transactions.

26. (Original) The system of claim 25, wherein the data storage arrangement is adapted to store user profile information for carriers and wherein the central transaction arrangement is adapted to associate the particular ones of the shipping transactions with particular carriers.

27. (Original) The system of claim 26, wherein the central transaction arrangement is further adapted to store historical elapsed time data for particular carriers and to permit access to the stored historical elapsed time data to a party as a function of user profile information for the party.

28. (Original) The system of claim 26, wherein the central transaction arrangement is further adapted to store event data including cost data for shipping transactions for the particular carriers and to permit access to the stored cost data to a party as a function of user profile information for the party.

29. (Original) The system of claim 26, wherein the central transaction arrangement is further adapted to store historical elapsed time data and event data including cost data for particular carriers and to automatically select a carrier as a function of timing and cost characteristics for a particular proposed shipment transaction.

Claims 30-40. (Cancelled).